THE EVALUATION OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE COMPETENCIES THAT TEACHERS SHOULD POSSESS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

AVALIAÇÃO DAS PERCEPÇÕES DOS FUTUROS PROFESSORES SOBRE AS COMPETÊNCIAS QUE OS PROFESSORES DEVEM POSSUIR NO SÉCULO XXI

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Abstract. The history of the teaching profession dates back as far as the beginning of humanity. As a social and communal being, humans have always been in effort transfer their knowledge to future generations throughout the ages. It is obvious that the teaching profession will exist in every age and in every society as long as humanity exists. However, as significant developments, the requirements of the age, the desired profiles of individuals, and changes in the profession lead to differences in education programs, the competencies that teachers should possess are also shaped according to the era in which they live. The related literature was reviewed and it was revealed that no such study had been conducted in the TRNC. This study aims to reveal the prospective teachers' perspectives on the competencies that the teachers should have in the 21st century. This study was conducted with 31 teacher candidates studying in the 4th grade at Near East University and Girne University in TRNC in the fall semester of the 2023-2024 academic year. The research was conducted with qualitative research method and case study design was used in the research. Data were collected by using a semi-structured interview form which was prepared by the researcher and it consisted of three questions. The data were analysed with descriptive analysis and direct quotations from the views of the teacher candidates were included. The results showed that he teacher candidates are aware of 21st century skills.

Keywords: Teaching, competency, 21st century skills.

Resumo. A história da profissão docente remonta ao início da humanidade. Como um ser social e comunitário, os humanos sempre se esforçaram para transferir seu conhecimento para as gerações futuras ao longo dos tempos. É óbvio que a profissão docente existirá em todas as épocas e em todas as sociedades enquanto a humanidade existir. No entanto, como desenvolvimentos significativos, os requisitos da época, os perfis desejados dos indivíduos e as mudanças na profissão levam a diferenças nos programas educacionais, as competências que os professores devem possuir também são moldadas de acordo com a era em que vivem. A literatura relacionada foi revisada e foi revelado que nenhum estudo desse tipo foi conduzido no TRNC. Este estudo visa revelar as perspectivas dos futuros professores sobre as competências que os professores devem ter no século XXI. Este estudo foi conduzido com 31 candidatos a professores estudando na 4ª série na Near East University e na Girne University no TRNC no semestre de outono do ano acadêmico de 2023-2024. A pesquisa foi conduzida com o método de pesquisa qualitativa e o desenho do estudo de caso foi usado na pesquisa. Os dados foram coletados usando um formulário de entrevista semiestruturado que foi preparado pelo pesquisador e consistiu em três perguntas. Os dados foram analisados com análise descritiva e citações diretas das visões dos candidatos a professores foram incluídas. Os resultados mostraram que os candidatos a professores estão cientes das habilidades do século XXI.

Palavras-chave: Ensino, competência, habilidades do século XXI.

1. INTRODUCTION

The acceleration of globalization, the increase in the use of communication technologies, the increase in the production of information, and the realization and continuation of development in the 21st century due to the global economy require a human power with an

increased level of welfare, adopting cultural values, equipped with new knowledge and skills, self-confident, respectful to different cultures. Due to social, economic, political and technological developments in the 21st century, it is seen that the qualities that the individuals are expected to have also changed. In addition, these changes also influence educational systems, necessitating certain essential changes in the knowledge, skills, and competencies that individuals need to acquire (Harari, 2018).

21st century skills include creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration, learning and innovation skills, information and media literacy, life and professional skills including adaptability and entrepreneurship (Ekici, Abide, Canbolat, & Öztürk, 2017; Görkaş, Otuz, & Ekici, 2017; Şahin, Arslan Namlı, & Schreglmann, 2016). These skills are based on understanding and performance and they enable individuals to lead a quality life, solve problems easily, analyze the events around them by developing different perspectives, and be successful in their professional and social lives (Anagün, Atalay, Kılıç, & Yaşar, 2016).

Competencies are the ways in which students cope with complex challenges and include critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, communication and collaboration. Character qualities involve how students approach their changing environments, and they include curiosity, initiative, perseverance/courage, adaptability, leadership, and social and cultural awareness (Erten, 2019).

Çağlar (2018) emphasizes that in today's world, the most crucial aspect of education is not simply imparting knowledge but rather making the individuals understand, utilize, and evaluate the information and relate it to the real world. He also argues that the traditional notion of "learning" and "working" phases in an individual's life will undergo a shift. In additional, he states that schools should emphasize life skills rather than technical skills, so that individuals will raise in such a way that they will be able to cope with the changes and developments. Similarly, Kenan (2005) stated that some developments in education in the 21st century will fundamentally affect schools. These developments are technological advances, political developments in the world, economic changes, development of mass media, globalization and multiculturalism.

In this context, students will need to interpret events in the world, produce original ideas and products, recognize mass media and raise awareness, and learn to live together with different languages and cultures.

The World Economic Forum [WEF] has identified the skills that individuals need to possess in the future. They are complex problem-solving skills, analytical and critical thinking skills, innovation, management skills, interpersonal/interdepartmental coordination skills, emotional intelligence, evaluation and decision-making skills, service orientation, negotiation skills, and cognitive flexibility skills (Gray, 2016).

Since these skills will determine the success of countries in global competition, they should be acquired in schools (Yalçın, 2018) and those who will raise the new generation should be equipped in this regard. Since teachers will be the ones who will set an example for the students in every sense and provide education according to the 21st century understanding, the training of teachers is a situation that should be given great importance. The selection and training of teacher candidates should be in accordance with 21st century education standards. In addition, teachers are required to be able to understand their students, communicate with them effectively, follow and adapt to cultural and technological changes, and have problem-solving skills and leadership ability (Aydeniz, 2017).

Research Problem

Teachers need to have 21st century skills and be able to apply them in education. Therefore, it is very important for prospective teachers, who are the teachers of the future, to have these skills From this point of view, this study will seek to answer the following question: What are

the competencies that teachers should have in the 21st century according to the views of prospective teachers in TRNC?

Aim of the Research

The study aimed to reveal the opinions of prospective teachers regarding the competencies that teachers should have in the 21st century. In this study, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What are the field-related competencies that teachers should have in the 21st century according to the views of prospective teachers?
2. What are the values that teachers should have in the 21st century regarding the views of prospective teachers?
3. What are the personal competencies that teachers should have in the 21st century according to the views of prospective teachers??

2. METHODOLOGY

Model of the Research

In this qualitative research, a case study design was used. In this design, it is aimed to collect detailed and in-depth information about a situation with multiple sources of information and to describe the situation in the finest details (Creswell, 2012).

Sample

Convenient sampling method was preferred in determining the study group. Due to the limitations in terms of time, money and labor force, this method is used to select the sample from easily accessible and applicable units (Büyüköztürk, 2019).

All students participated in the study voluntarily and their consent was obtained. The participants, who were determined through this sampling method, consist of 31 prospective teachers studying in the 4th grade of Turkish, History and English Language Teaching Departments at Near East University and University of Kyrenia in the fall semester of the 2023-2024 academic year.

Instruments and Procedures

In this research, a semi-structured interview form was used to determine the opinions of prospective teachers about the competencies that teachers should have in the 21st century (Patton, 2002). With this form, it was aimed to explain the participants' ideas in more depth, to reduce misunderstandings, to protect individuality and to evaluate the situation from the participant's point of view (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

In the preparation of the form used in the research, three open-ended questions were developed after reviewing the relevant literature. This form was presented to two field experts to examine points such as the scope of the subject, the way the questions were asked, and the comprehensibility of the questions. As a result of the feedback given by the field experts, the data collection tool was finalized.

The researcher guided the students during the interview. After the written opinions were received from the students, the interview forms containing the answers of the students were kept for analysis by the researcher, paying attention to the principle of student confidentiality.

Data Analysis

The interview question responses received from the students were subjected to descriptive analysis and summarized and interpreted according to predetermined themes (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011).

Data were read and organized according to themes. The organized data were defined and direct quotations were given where necessary. While giving the quotations, a coding such as "Tur 1, Tar 1, İng 1 ..." was used to indicate the departments and the order of the students. The findings are supported through quotations.

The detailed and in-depth transfer of the collected data and the direct presentation of the identified opinions and experiences are intended to reveal the validity and reliability of the research and strengthen the study (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013).

3. RESULTS

In this part of the study, findings obtained from teacher candidates' opinions regarding the competencies that teachers should have in the 21st century are presented. These findings were categorized under three themes: field-related competencies, personal competencies and values.

Findings related to the participants

Table 1. Distribution of the participants

Participants	Distribution
Turkish Language Teaching Department	11
History Teaching Department	10
English Language Teaching Department	10

As seen in Table 1, there were a total of 31 participants in this study, including 11 students from the Department of Turkish Language Teaching, 10 students from the Department of History Teaching and 10 students from the Department of English Language Teaching.

Findings related to prospective teachers' views on teachers' field-related competencies, personal competencies and values

Table 2. Frequency and percentage distribution of findings regarding prospective teachers' views about teachers' field-related competencies

Field related competencies	F	%
Communication skills	15	48,38
Using basic language skills effectively	14	45,16
Using technology effectively in class	13	41,93
Using contemporary methods and techniques	11	35,48
Being knowledgeable in the field	11	35,48
Being sensitive to individual differences	11	35,48
Being able to prepare creative materials	5	16,12
Using time effectively	5	16,12
Classroom management	3	9,67

Table 2 shows that the competencies with the highest frequency among the field-related competencies are listed as effective communication skills (15), effective use of basic language skills (14), effective use of technology in the classroom (13), use of contemporary methods and techniques (11), being knowledgeable in the field (11) and being sensitive to individual differences (11).

Some of the views of prospective teachers regarding the competencies that teachers should have in the 21st century are as follows:

- *The teacher should be able to communicate effectively with students in the classroom and use the four basic language skills well (Tür 7).*

- *Teachers should have good communication skills, know how to communicate with students, and use technology correctly and effectively in the classroom (Tar 1).*
- *First of all, it is most important for teachers to have effective communication skills. Then, I think that in today's world they should have a good command of technology and use interesting methods and techniques in their lessons (İng 4).*

Findings concerning prospective teachers' views on the personal competencies that teachers should have

Table 3. Frequency and percentage distribution of findings regarding prospective teachers' views about teachers' personal competencies

Personal competencies	F	%
Innovative	13	41,93
Researcher	12	38,7
Creative	12	38,7
Communication skills	10	32,25
Leadership	10	32,25
High self-confidence	8	25,8
General culture knowledge	7	22,58
Critical thinking	5	16,12
Open minded	5	16,12
Problem solving	4	12,9

According to Table 3, the ones with the highest frequency among prospective teachers' views on personal competencies are; innovation (13), research (12), creativity (12), communication skills (10), and leadership (10).

Some of the views regarding the personal competencies that teachers should have in the 21st century are as follows:

- *Turkish teachers should always be open to innovations, search for innovations in their field and be a good role model for their students (İng 4).*
- *Turkish teachers should have high creativity, always be open to innovations and follow them (Tar 10).*

Findings concerning prospective teachers' views on the values that teachers should have

Table 4. Frequency and percentage distribution of findings regarding prospective teachers' views about teachers' values

Values	F	%
Justice	18	58,06
Affection	10	32,25
Respect	10	32,25
Tolerance	10	32,25
Patriotism and commitment to national values	5	16,12
Empathy	5	16,12
Patience	4	12,9
Sharing	4	12,9
Responsibility	4	12,9

As seen in Table 4, the ones with the highest frequency among prospective teachers' views on values are; justice (18), affection (10), respect (10) and tolerance (10). Some of the views regarding the values that teachers should have in the 21st century are as follows:

- *Teachers should be tolerant, fair, loyal to their country and nation (Tür 5).*

- *Teachers should be patient, fair, loving, and tolerant (İng 9).*
- *A teacher should first be fair, then loving and patient (Tar 7).*
- *Teachers should be responsible and tolerant with high empathy. They should have a high sense of justice and always be loving and caring (Tür 2)*

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide a nuanced understanding of prospective teachers' perspectives on the field related competencies, personal competencies, and values that the teachers should possess in the 21st century. These insights are critical as they reflect the evolving educational landscape and the increasing demands placed on teachers to adapt to rapid changes.

Prospective teachers emphasized the significance of effective communication, language skills, and technological fluency. This aligns with the evolving needs of classrooms, where clear communication and the ability to leverage technology are crucial for engaging students and fostering knowledge acquisition. The emphasis on contemporary methods and techniques suggests an awareness of the need to move beyond traditional pedagogy and embrace innovative approaches.

Additionally, valuing field-specific knowledge and sensitivity to individual differences reflects an understanding of the importance of tailoring instruction to diverse learners and subject matter requirements. In terms of the personal competencies, innovation, research, creativity, communication, and leadership were highlighted. These skills empower teachers to not only impart knowledge but also to cultivate critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and a love for learning in their students. Effective communication, highlighted in both personal and field-related competencies, underscores its centrality in fostering a positive learning environment and building strong student-teacher relationships.

Another finding of the study highlighted the importance of values such as justice, affection, respect, and tolerance, which are considered crucial character traits for 21st-century educators. These values foster an inclusive classroom environment where every student feels valued and supported. Educators who exemplify these qualities can act as positive role models, helping to shape well-rounded individuals ready for a globalized world.

It is noteworthy that these findings align with those of Erten (2019), who also identified effective communication skills and a commitment to justice and equality as essential teacher competencies. This overlap underscores the significance of these skills and values in developing effective educators. Furthermore, Erten's (2019) study highlights the necessity for teachers to "follow the technology," which corresponds with our findings on the importance of technological proficiency.

This convergence indicates a consensus on the core skills and values needed for teachers to successfully navigate the complexities of contemporary classrooms. Similarly, a recent study by Coşkun (2022) titled "Teaching Profession and 21st Century Skills" highlights similar essential competencies for educators. Coşkun emphasizes the importance of effective communication, leveraging technology effectively, and staying current with educational innovations. This overlap strengthens the argument that these skills are fundamental for teachers in today's classrooms. Coşkun's focus on keeping up with innovations aligns with our own finding regarding the need for teachers to be adaptable and integrate new approaches and technologies.

By fostering these competencies and values, teacher education programs can empower future educators to create dynamic and inclusive learning environments that prepare students for success in a rapidly changing world.

5. CONCLUSION

As a result of the research, effective communication skills ranked first among the field-related competencies that teachers should possess. Teacher candidates highlight teachers who can convey information clearly, communicate effectively with students, and are sensitive to student needs.

In addition, according to the results of the research, field related competencies that teachers should possess include using basic language skills effectively, using technology effectively in the classroom, using contemporary methods and techniques, being knowledgeable in their field, considering individual differences, being able to prepare creative materials, managing time effectively, and possessing classroom management skills.

Based on the findings, teachers should not only teach subject-specific lessons but also effectively employ contemporary learning strategies, methods, and techniques in their lessons. They should also support the topic with creative materials and technology, serve as role models for students, and enable students to develop into thoughtful and competent individuals aligned with the demands of the 21st century. As a result, it is thought that these listed teacher competencies will contribute to the prospective teachers to interact with the world and keep up with the needs of the information age.

According to findings related to personal competencies, innovation ranks first. Teachers with an innovative mindset should provide students with diverse learning experiences and update course content. As a result, continuously reviewing, updating, and improving their teaching methods in line with the changing world will enable teachers to create a more effective learning environment for their students.

In addition, according to research findings, other personal competencies that teachers should possess include research skills, creativity, strong communication skills, leadership, high self-confidence, general knowledge, critical thinking, open-mindedness, and problem-solving abilities. From this point of view, in today's world where the education system is evolving towards individualism, academicians' taking these characteristics into consideration during the education process of prospective teachers can make positive contributions to the development of their current abilities.

When examining findings related to the values that teachers should possess, the following values emerge in order: justice, affection, respect, tolerance, patriotism and commitment to national values, empathy, patience, sharing, and responsibility. As a result, when interpreting these findings as a whole, it can be said that teacher candidates demonstrate a sensitive understanding of these values.

Based on the findings obtained from the research, it can be said that the teacher profile revealed by prospective teachers' views on teacher competencies in the 21st century overlaps with contemporary norms. Specifically, in terms of field-related competencies, there is an emphasis on effective use of technology and communication skills. Regarding personal competencies, innovation and creativity are highlighted. In terms of values, a worldview based on justice, affection, respect, and tolerance emerges prominently.

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